

AUTOMATED E-MAIL LIST MANAGER/ RUDENESS IN THE COMPUTER AGE

August 23, 1997 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

From time to time friends write to us to suggest that many of the problems with maintaining the large Fundamental Baptist News Service mailing list can be solved by using an automated e-mail list manager. We appreciate this advice, and there are probably others who are wondering why we have not automated the list.

We are well aware of this type of thing, both because we have explored that option and because we deal with automated lists on a daily basis. Perhaps I will change my mind in the future, but at this time I do not want to go the automated route. The experience I have had with them has not been satisfactory. In some cases, they create more problems than they solve in the context of the type of list we have, a list which constantly changes and which is publicly offered via the web. I believe our list is approaching 2,000 and it has grown rapidly. Further, we want to maintain control over who uses our list, and we do that by personally reading the information they provide to us when they subscribe to see if it is acceptable and by communicating further with people if we have questions. **FINALLY, I ABSOLUTELY HATE THE IMPERSONAL ASPECT OF HAVING TO DEAL WITH A COMPUTER RATHER THAN A LIVING HUMAN BEING!** I have dealt with computers practically every day of my life for roughly 15 years, but there are many aspects of the computer that I absolutely despise. Being forced to communicate with a computer when I should be dealing with a human being is definitely one of those aspects.

When you communicate with the Fundamental Baptist News Service, do not forget that you are communicating with real people, not with a computer. We have feelings like real people and we have limitations like real people.

It is fine to boss a computer around with short little commands like "subscribe" or "unsubscribe." It is fine not to say thank you to a computer. We don't thank a computer when it responds to our commands and provides the help we need. It is fine to expect a computer to do what you command immediately.

That is all well and good when dealing with a computer, but I have been witness to the fact that the computer mentality is affecting the way people deal with people in a modern computer environment. There is a lack of graciousness and patience displayed via electronic communication, even among many who claim to be born again Christians. I have been guilty of this myself. This is not good.

We can be as rude as we please with the computer; boss it around and expect it to jump at our commands immediately; but let's be more gracious when we are dealing with people--even when dealing with them over the vast impersonal Internet.